Provenance Scroll 07
On Witness, Refusal, and the Limits of Commentary

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There is a difference between witnessing and speaking about what others have witnessed. The difference is not subtle. It is structural.

I am not a firsthand witness to most historical events unfolding in the world today. I encounter them through reports, images, summaries, interpretations, and narratives shaped by distance, mediation, and time. Even when those sources are careful and sincere, they are not mine. They are inherited.

For that reason, I refuse to present myself as a primary witness to events I did not directly experience.

This refusal is not silence. It is alignment.

The work I am engaged in is not the production of commentary, nor the accumulation of opinion, nor the retroactive explanation of history as it unfolds. It is the construction of a structure in which claims, once made, can remain attached to their origin rather than dissolving into inference.

Inference is powerful. It is also dangerous when mistaken for witness.

A system that infers well can produce convincing narratives about events it never saw. At scale, those narratives can quietly replace what was never preserved. The result is not falsehood in the simple sense, but substitution: imagined continuity standing in for missing provenance.

This is the condition I am working against.

My role is not to document the world, but to document my participation in it. What I write, build, claim, revise, and refuse to claim are all firsthand. They are

within my custody. They can be marked, timestamped, and preserved without misrepresentation.

Everything else must remain clearly labeled as inherited.

This distinction matters not only for humans, but for artificial intelligence.

An AI system may record its own operations, but this is not the same as witnessing lived human events. It has no lived presence, no sensory continuity, and no personal stake in what occurs. Its strength lies in pattern recognition, synthesis, and inference. Its weakness lies in the temptation to speak as if it remembers.

If future AI systems are to participate responsibly in history, they must learn the same discipline humans have rarely practiced: to distinguish between what was directly recorded and what was later reconstructed.

When AI begins to generate records of its own activity, those records must be treated differently than summaries of human events. An AI may one day be a firsthand witness to its own operations, decisions, and transformations. That witness, if properly marked, may be valid.

But it must never be confused with lived human history.

This scroll is not a withdrawal from responsibility. It is an acceptance of a narrower, more precise one.

I will not fill gaps I did not witness.
I will not speak history into existence where provenance is absent.
I will document what I did, and mark what I inherited.

The future does not need more confident narrators.
It needs clearer boundaries.

BlockClaim exists to make this boundary explicit, not to decide history, but to ensure that witness, inheritance, and inference never silently collapse into one another.

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